

Somerset Hospital, Cape Town, South Africa and Tamale, Ghana

My elective was split between Cape Town in South Africa and Tamale in Ghana.

The first month was a placement in the Emergency Room at the Somerset Hospital in Cape Town. Whilst being state-funded, the unit was very well-supplied as it had lots of equipment sponsored by large South African companies. We were expected to start at 08:00 each morning for the Emergency Room ward round, at which we would see all the patients that had been brought in that night. We would get a number of jobs to do from that ward round, and once they were finished, we would begin seeing our own patients. The level of competence and knowledge expected of a doctor was similar to that expected in UK but the doctors' practical skills were perhaps better. Socially the environment in Cape Town was vibrant, with a number of local medical students based at the hospital.

After Cape Town it was time to go to Tamale, a large town in northern Ghana. I was placed on the general surgery division, and this placement involved attendance in surgical theatres, ward rounds and surgical liaison in the Emergency Room. It was a very interesting month. Whilst many of the surgical trainees were far more skilled than their UK counterparts, the procedures in theatres were very similar. The main difference came in the clinics, where we would see very late presentations of serious disease such as breast cancer and hernias. The entire time there was very interesting.

The elective was made possible in part by the generous contribution of the Association and the experience has contributed to my clinical practice and outlook in ways that I never thought possible.

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